1:Herskovits & Herskovits E-5 (1928-1929) 1934
SR8 Bush Negroes SR8
Saramacca

502
484
731

It was Sedefo's boat, there in the distance, tilted to one side in what looked to us like still water. The other canoes turned and paddled furiously to reach him, but he had righted his boat before they could come alongside him, and was off down the river to recover what he had lost. The water had claimed the basket back of the tarpaulin-covered load, and a carved paddle which had slipped off when the canoe tilted. The basket belonged to Sedefo. It held his food for the journey up river and the downgoing. The paddle was also his—the finest he had—and had been intended for ceremonial usage when he called as spokesman for us on village heads asking for a night's hospitality, and particularly at the Granman's village, and still later on the way home, when he brought political messages in behalf of his clan to friendly clans along the way he passed. He also lost his best cloth; it was not just a piece of striped cotton a man bought in the white man's store; it had been patiently and dexterously pieced together from many pieces [291] of cloth, plain and striped, in a pattern which was known to the ancestors. His young second wife had made it for him. Her first child was an infant at her breast. When she heard about this, she would think of Sedefo's kunu, and be afraid. Was it so big a kunu that it would punish a child of his wife's family, too?

This is what the men said while the boats waited for Sedefo to return from his vain search down the rapids. The [196] men had not expected him to recover the things lost. When kunu took, there was nothing that could be done. And it was kunu. The *Bakra-sani*—the white man's things—had remained in the boat unharmed! We looked at the few rocks against which the boat had crashed. They showed plainly above the water, and the current about them made so small a break in the still water that the spirit of this ruffled piece had never disclosed its name, had never before received notice. The three other canoes had gone through without even the grunts from the paddlers which came when the going was hard, for all that was necessary was to go straight for the rocks, let the current swing the boat

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around, give a strong thrust with the pole-stick, and the canoe was through—a bit of child's play.

We were soon again to see Sedefo's kunu strike. This time it was almost at dusk. The men, it appeared, would not be able to make the village we had planned on for the night. In half an hour it would be dark, and here we were fully two hours' fast traveling from our intended destination. Overhead clouds were coming up from the east. The sky was rapidly becoming overcast. Rain—and everywhere the impenetrable wall of green, rising dark and forbidding. To make camp where we were would have taken at least two hours, and it was growing darker and darker. The men refused to clear the underbrush in the dark.

It seemed, however, that five minutes upstream on the opposite bank and only a little to the south of where we had stopped to talk things over was a village, the name of which when we heard it we recognized as one of the two we had been asked not to visit. There was nothing to do but to brave the displeasure of the Granman and stop there; so turning we headed our boats toward the opposite shore.

In midstream a great wind came up, a wind that in suddenness and force is only met in the tropics. The men shrieked and shouted and struggled until our boats reached shore. But Sedefo's boat, which was the second, seemed to be lifted bodily out of the water. We could see a black mass being heaved up . . . the black tarpaulin was overboard going downstream, and Sedefo after it.

The wind subsided as quickly as it had sprung up, and when Sedefo came back sometime later, he carried the dripping tarpaulin on his head. He did not drink the rum we gave to warm him, but poured it over his hands and his boat as an offering.

The next day we talked with Bayo about kunu.

"Why is it, Bayo, that Sedefo lost his food in the still water? Was it because he felt safe and didn't take care in such small rapids?"

"No," he said promptly, "that's how kunu works. A man travels on the river all his life. He goes over small

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and forth on the sandy bank to the rhythm of the voicees in the drums, but their gods would not come. They could not dance, they could not find peace while the drums spoke, and so this disconsolate pacing went on week after week, on those days when the river gods might be danced to. Sometimes the pulse of the drumming, quickening for an interval, stirred the dancers. A shudder would go through the body of one or another and the dry throats would fall to uttering the sacred cries, but almost the next instant the hand of the drummer would go limp, and once more the listless, agonized pacing would continue. The gods were angered. When the drums called them from the river bottom, they came grudgingly and remained sullen, refusing to make their wishes known, and no gods or ancestors came to counsel the wise men in their sleep how to bend the will of the spirits of the river.

In the fields the parched earth baked in the merciless heat until it was like whitened bone. The few plants that had pushed their way up through the sandy soil were now brown dust which any wind might scatter. But there was no wind. No rain, no wind, for in the river the god of the wind dwells, and in the sky the rain god, and these gods are twins, and twins have but one soul, since it is with the gods as it is with humans.

No rain, no wind. Famine was upon the land.

At last, at the village of Opoku a woman had a dream. She was a pure albino, one of the type who, together with those who show by the slight turn of red in their wooly hair a strain of albinism, are called Toné people, and are identified with the river gods. To this Toné woman the gods came in sleep, and spoke their will.

"And what was it you gave to the gods?" we asked Sedefo, who had fallen silent at this point in his story.

"Mati," he said, after a pause, "I am not an important man. You ask what I may not tell. My mouth cannot take upon itself to speak what concerns our big men."

This much he would say. A boat filled with things had been sent down the river. Men standing at the river bank

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had seen a hand reach out for the boat, had seen it vanish out of sight. The gods had accepted the offerings. That year the Granman from the city, the white Granman, had to send rice from a far country to feed them, but the next year the crops were good, and all had been well since that time.

"And was that when this shrine was removed to the other island?"

"*M'an sabi. A kan de*—I do not know. It is possible."

2

"When you get to the Mamadam," we had been told by a priestess in the city, "wash your face in the running water, and call on the Mother of the River three times."

Another had said, "If your foot should trip anywhere, be sure to call on your ancestors, but if you should happen to slip at the Mamadam, you must go at once to the river, strike the water three times, and ask the Mother of the River to release your soul. It is a bad thing to lose your soul there."

And our principal story-teller in the city, who was something of a wit, had said: "You both have light eyes. Your hair is not dark. You are not unlike the Bonkoru people who are light, and who, up the river, you will hear called the Toné folk." He was speaking of albinos. "It may be that you have a river god without knowing it. When you come to the Mamadam the spirit may come to you. You may find yourself speaking the tongue that only the Toné people know, and dancing the dances to the river gods, and swimming up the rapids. It will be a fine sight to see you dance to the drums. There was once such a woman. A woman white as you are, you hear? I myself saw her dance. When she danced, she wore red, and put a plug through her lip, and as she danced her color changed. She became black. When the spirit was satisfied, it let her go, and she paled and was a white woman again. I myself saw that woman dance. I saw her grow black while she danced, and saw

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morning, they tell us when we call on them. That is the black man's way.

"You white people have money, you have fine houses, you wear clothes, you can count. They tell me that you say in your books all people must be friends. But you have wars. If white people kill white people, then *mati*—friend—how will it be with black people living among the whites?"

Granman Yankuso rose, when he said this, and took from the chains of the suspended lamp a folded envelope. He handed it to us, and from it we took out a letter on the stationery of the League of Nations, signed by its Secretary, Sir Eric Drummond. As we were reading this, he left the council house and soon returned with a larger envelope, which he had kept uncreased, and from it brought out a photograph of the Council of the League of Nations in session. They were his proud possessions. While the World War lasted there was no work for the Bush Negroes on the river. They could not earn the money they needed to buy cloths for marrying and powder and rum for ceremonial usage. The Bush Negroes called it a "great money famine," in the way of their Anansi stories which so often began with "This was a time of great famine." Through a missionary on the upper river, the Granman learned of the war, and through him later of the League, which the missionary had undoubtedly brought up as the white man's defense against the challenge of the black tribal head, who asked, "How will it be with black people living among the whites?"

It was then that the Granman through this same missionary addressed himself to the white rulers far away, telling of the fear of the blacks, and counseling them the wisdom of peace!

4

In the council house Granman Moana Yankuso was host to the Gankwe men. They were there to take their leave of him before starting down river. Asikanu, the handsome brother of the Gankwe clan head, who was sent away from his village while the elders were deciding upon his adultery

2:Kahn D-5 (1922-1930)1931
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778 carvings. Still another magic device is a red necklace of macaw feathers, to bring luck in hunting. Another obeiah with
[843] a tinkling bell is worn around the neck by pregnant women to tell the unborn child that everything is auspicious in the outside world.

Some of the beliefs accompanying these amulets are odd
[774] and child-like. The Djukas think that spirits are afraid of strangers, and flee in terror when a stranger is encountered. The inhabitants of the little town of *Pekein Say* (Talk a Little Bit) have the power to call back hunters who are lost in the bush, a virtue peculiar to these townfolk alone. These curious beliefs persist despite the fact that they could easily be tested and exposed. Any coincidence will strongly reinforce them. Late one evening, going up the river, we came to an Aucaner village and stopped to spend the night. Not liking the looks of the place we told our paddlers to push on to the next village before night. Tired, they grumbled at this. To give weight to our decision we told the blacks that our obeiahs were warning us not to stay, and that it would be dangerous to let this warning pass unheeded. Impressed with the gravity of the warning, they acceded to our wishes. We went on, although not being able to reach the adjacent village in time we were forced to spend the night in the bush.

Later, coming back down the river, we learned that the village we had passed by had held, on that very night, a great and disastrous dance. There had been much drinking of high
[579] wine, and, in the drunken and hysterical excitement that
● 731] followed, half the town was burned down and three men were killed.

[Agodé bakka locality]

/84 cont./

621
613
423
241

No.		Last User	Year	By What Right	Duration of Last Fallow Period
8	△	Grand Man Difu	1952	--	?
9	○	Paata (Djuka woman settled in Boniville)	1947(?)	id.	already used by Paata about 1940
10	○	Térésa (L2, E57) clearing cut by her sons	1953	id.	?
11	○	Paata (see above)	1953		already used by Paata in 1950

Thus, out of this group of eleven clearings, two remain attributed to the grand man, one to a woman of the Dju lineage, two to a Djuka woman, one to a woman of the Lapé lineage, five to members of the Kotika lineage, all inhabitants of Boniville. /85/

[361]
[166]
[931]
[554]

Study of the clearings of the fraction of the Papaïston established in Boniville. This group formerly lived in Puu Mofu village at the mouth of the creek of the same name, abandoned about 1940 following an epidemic. Its settlement in Boniville is therefore recent. The oldest man in the group, Bukuman, a man of some 60 years, exerts de facto authority.

This group tends to add to its initial finage the band of land included between Boniville village and Puu Mofu Creek belonging to the Dikan lo (especially clearings Nos. 12, 13, 14).